

Contact: Officer Rachel Hammer
Community Resource Officer
Phone: 540-437-2672
Email: rhammer@harrisonburgva.gov

NEWS RELEASE

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Police Advise Caution When Forwarding Messages

The Harrisonburg Police Department encourages residents to always stay safe and be aware of your surroundings.

Within the past few days, messages have spread through social media about gang initiation taking place in Harrisonburg.

The CHARGE Gang Task Force, comprised of officials from the Harrisonburg Police Department and the Rockingham County Sheriff's Office, confirms that gangs are present in the community and they operate in areas throughout Harrisonburg and Rockingham County - including those areas traditionally associated with off-campus housing.

Specific initiation procedures and crimes indicated in circulating emails, Tweets, etc. have not been confirmed.

The Department has seen messages similar to this in years past. If anyone has received the messages, it is recommended by law enforcement to not continue forwarding the messages.

It is important for students and residents of the area to be cautious, aware of their surroundings, and engage in safe behavior.

Safety tips:

- Make a special effort to be conscious of your surroundings
- Travel in groups of two or more, especially at night
- Report suspicious activity/persons to police immediately
- Always keep your doors and windows locked
- If hosting a social gathering, only allow friends you know to enter your residence
- Keep track of your personal belongings at all times

It is always important to keep safety at the forefront of you mind.